

DAY OF THE DEAD EVENT CELEBRATES LIFE

By Linda McIntosh | TODAY'S LOCAL NEWS

The bright, colorful paintings of skeletons going up in Artists Alley set the mood for today's Dia de los Muertos celebration in downtown Oceanside.

Sure, the skeletons symbolize death, but they're singing and dancing, blowing trumpets and playing guitars.

"The day has a celebratory tone at its essence," said Carlos Von Son, a native of Mexico and professor at Palomar and MiraCosta colleges. "It's not focused on the loss of loved ones, but on the gladness of having shared life with them."

Despite area wildfires, the festival is still slated for today.

"Things were looking pretty ugly, but this is still a holiday and the community wants to celebrate it, so we're going ahead," said Cathy Nykiel, event coordinator for MainStreet Oceanside, which is hosting the event.

Area residents are invited to honor their loved ones during the daylong festivities by building *ofrendas*, or altars, filled with items that remind them of a person who died.

A chalk cemetery will be set up in Artists Alley for families to draw a memorial for someone who died.

Dia de los Muertos
WHEN 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. today
WHERE Pier View Way, east of Coast Highway, Oceanside
COST Free
INFORMATION (760) 754-4512

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Paintings, such as this one by David Lozeau, will be on display at the Dia de los Muertos Gallery Sunday in Oceanside. Courtesy photo



LIFESTYLE

Weekly planner

The Music Men will have their fourth annual **novice barbershop quartet contest**, 7 p.m. Tuesday at the Salvation Army, 1301 Las Villas Way, Escondido. Free. (760) 310-5080.

Carlsbad Premium Outlets will offer **trick-or-treating** to costumed children from 10 a.m. to 8 p.m. Wednesday at 5620 Paseo del Norte, Carlsbad. A Halloween Pet Costume Contest is at 4 p.m. There is a donation entry fee, and all proceeds will benefit the Rancho Coastal Humane Society. (760) 804-9000.

An **exhibit of art quilts** by Pacific Quilt Artists will open Wednesday and continue through Jan. 5 at the Rancho Buena Vista Adobe, 651 E. Vista Way, Vista. Visitors can meet the artists from 1 to 3 p.m. Dec. 2. Free. (760) 434-7491.

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> Coming Wednesday



There is no shortage of creepy stories in North County.

LIFESTYLE

Muertos

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"It's personal and yet it's communal because it's about individuals, and yet when you see them all together, it's about the community," Von Son said.

Von Son got the idea for the chalk cemetery after he noticed that the squares of concrete in Artists Alley look like little tombs.

"People draw beautiful things there, and they don't have to be as elaborate as the large ofrendas," he said.

People can put a marigold and a candle on each square of the chalk cemetery. The light and warmth from the candles and scent of the flowers is said to guide the spirit of the departed to visit those keeping vigil during the Day of the Dead. Von Son and his students are slated to put on a parade that parodies death and will give tours explaining the meaning behind the ofrendas built by Oaxacan and local families and artists.

The ofrendas are reminiscent of ones traditionally set up in Mexico that include loaves of pan de muerto (or bread of the dead), marigolds and sugar skulls.

"The festivities are a blending of Mexican culture into American culture," Von Son said.

The celebration has its roots in Mexico and Central America and is a connection to the past for many Mexicans living here.



David Lozeau's "Violin Skully" will be on display in Oceanside Sunday as part of the Dia de los Muertos celebration.
Courtesy photo